

Washington, DC – Today, Rep. Mike Honda, chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), issued the following statement regarding the natural disasters in the Asia Pacific:

“On behalf of all the Members of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, I extend my thoughts and prayers to all those affected by the devastating tsunami in the South Pacific, and earthquakes and typhoons throughout Southeast Asia.

“The President has declared American Samoa a major disaster area, as whole villages were destroyed by the tsunami. The U.S. government is in response phase, and currently, rescue workers seek to bring help to and stabilize those severely injured. Tragically, the death count in the Samoas already has reached 150 people, mostly young children and the elderly. We pray for the tens and thousands of survivors and their loved ones in the islands and here on the mainland.

“Two earthquakes also hit Indonesia yesterday and today, resulting in a death toll of over 500. In the Philippines, 277 people have been killed by an earlier storm in and around Manila, leaving hundreds of thousands homeless. That storm has moved through Vietnam and Cambodia, and is headed toward Laos and Thailand.

“These terrifying events are felt throughout the world as members of the Asian and Pacific Islander diasporas scramble to locate family members. As our caucus continues to monitor the disaster response, I praise the leadership of Vice Chair Rep. Eni Faleomavaega of American Samoa, a senior member of CAPAC. Rep. Faleomavaega and his staff have rushed to the aid of residents in American Samoa, and we stand ready to do whatever we can to support the Samoan community in the islands and here on the mainland.

“Executive Board Members Rep. Madeleine Z. Bordallo and Rep. Gregorio Kilili Sablan are closely monitoring Typhoon Melor in the Western Pacific and are in close communication with FEMA, NOAA and the Department of Defense to ensure appropriate federal response and support activities are in place if the situation warrants. Both are appreciative that FEMA has dispatched its Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) to Guam to assist in the response. And Rep. Sablan is appreciative that FEMA has also prepositioned a Command and Control Element of four people on Saipan, which is already engaged with the CNMI Emergency Management Office, tracking Melor.

“As we follow the disaster response, our hearts and prayers go out to the families facing the suffering and loss of these devastating events.”